

State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC)/Stakeholder Meeting

Virtual Meeting Conducted Utilizing Microsoft Teams

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 15, 2021

Members in attendance: Paul Barbato, Debbie Esposito, Mark Brugger, Chris Shamburg, Patricia White, Andrea Moore

Members not in attendance: Barbara Gantwerk, Kerri Walsifer, Susan Vandermark, Vikas Jain, Viviana Litovsky, Lonjete Nias, Kristy Ritvasky, Lynda Shanahan

Resource Representatives in attendance: Donna Holzschuh, John Tkacz, Kelley Michalowski, Eva Scott, Rachel Ledden-Albadine, Toni Scott

Resource Representatives not in attendance: Dan Mergen

Guests and members of the public: Kim Buxenbaum, Dominic Rota, Damian Petino, Kim Murray, Chinwe Osondu, Keshia Trotman, MaryBeth Berry, Kathy Goldenberg, Sol Heckelman, Lauren Agoratus, Antonia Vignola, Tatiana Degrosa

Stakeholders in attendance: Julie Norflus-Good, Sean Murphy, Fred Buglione, Carolyn Marano, Tracy Amerman, Patricia Dowd, Sharon Lohrmann

As there was not a quorum of Council Members, the meeting began at 9:39am with the Stakeholder Presentation of Indicator 17: State Systemic Implementation Plan (SSIP) and State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) presented by Dr. Damian Petino, Assistant Director Office of Special Education.

The SSEAC portion of the meeting began at 10:15am. February's meeting minutes were not able to be approved as there was not a SSEAC Council Member quorum. February's meeting minutes will be approved during April's meeting.

I. Office of Special Education Updates

Dr. Kim Buxenbaum, Director Office of Special Education, welcomed everyone to the combined SSEAC and Stakeholder meeting. The NJDOE continues to be busy providing support and services to parents and school districts. Currently in the process of hiring within the Office of Special Education to build capacity to continue to supports parents and school districts.

NJ Inclusive Education Technical Assistance Project is now open and taking applications for Pre-K and K12 Technical Assistance and Systemic Change portion of the program. Representatives from Montclair State and NJ Coalition for Inclusive Education will be joining a County Meeting of Special Education Specialists to share information to roll out to the Directors of Special Education across the state.

Dr. Petino credited for getting the State Systemic Improvement Plan submitted early to the USDOE.

NJ PBSIS and NJ IETA applications released in a Broadcast.

Zoom session held by the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development to learn more about the new New Jersey Career Assistance Navigator 360 and NJ Can360 programs taking place April 26 at 3pm.

ELA achievements and success stories being collected on the NJDOE website. Department to share different achievements and successes through COVID 19 – What innovations have occurred and what good lessons have been learned will be shared.

New Jersey School Performance Reports released April 7, 2021.

John Tkacz thanked SSEAC for the opportunity to be part of SSEAC and introduced Toni Scott to the group.

II. State Board of Education Update

Kathy Goldenberg, President, provided a quick overview of the most recent State Board of Education meeting. Topics included the presentation of the State Board calendar including religious holidays, resolutions for the School and Library Month, and resolutions for Better Speech and Hearing Month; all of which were approved. Ms. Goldenberg stressed that the State Board is present at the SSEAC meetings to hear concerns of those present to take back to the Board for discussion and consideration.

Mary Beth Berry discussed the Career and Technical Educational Committee. There are currently 79,000 CTE students and it is the goal to bring this number to 90,000 by 2025. Discussed the Perkins Grants and funding along with some changes. The program quality indicator chosen for NJ is work based learning. There is an agreement with Rutgers to train more Structured Learning Experience Coordinators to enable districts to increase opportunities for students. Rutgers hopes to have 1,000 SLE Coordinators trained in the next 3-4 years.

The National Technical Assistance Center for Transition will be hosting a virtual meeting of interdisciplinary state teams to learn about and discuss improving transition services for students with disabilities. Ms. Berry, Bill Freeman, and Toni Scott will be attending this event being held May 3-6, 2021. Ms. Berry stressed the importance of continuing the work of work based learning.

III. No SSEAC Council Discussion as there was not a quorum of members.

VII. Announcements

Tatiana Degrosa discussed the SPAN Parent Leadership and Advocacy Conference May 2021 – virtual. Sponsorship opportunities available. Reach out to Debbie Esposito. Great tools for parents to build leadership skills relating to their special needs student. May 11 and 13 from 1pm-4:30pm.

Debbie Esposito discussed Lauren Agoratus's article in the New Jersey Chapter of the American Association of Pediatrics titled "Restraint in Schools; the Law, the Role of the Pediatrician"

Toni Scott, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, discussed the DVR paid internship for any school youth between the ages of 14-21. Students must still be in school and there is at least one opportunity per county. Some counties have multiple opportunities. Grant is fully funded by the Department of Labor. It is a 6 week, fully paid program. At least minimum wage

or more. Referrals can come directly from the school districts or vendors. Students do not have to have a full DVR case open to apply.

VIII. Public Comment

Public Comments can be submitted to SpEdAdvisoryCouncil@doe.nj.gov.

Sol Heckelman commented that the School Psychology Association is concerned about the criteria being used to determine the eligibility of special education students and suggested the State Code needs to more aligned with the Federal Code.

IX. Adjournment

The public portion of the meeting was adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for a virtual meeting Thursday, May 20, 2021.